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REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP
IN THE NORTH CAROLINA SOCIETY
OF THE CINCINNATI

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REQUIREMENTS FOR
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Many requests are made concerning the Rules of Eligibility for Admission to The North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati. The Secretary has therefore prepared the following compilation of pertinent information which may prove helpful to both applicants and members. It should be understood that the Society reserves full control over admission to membership and the interpretation of the within rules, and for that reason the following material is subject to change.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE NORTH CAROLINA SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI

The *Institution* of the Society of the Cincinnati sets forth eligibility in the following terms:

"All the officers of the American Army, as well as those who have resigned with honor, after three years service in the capacity of officers, or who have been deranged by resolutions of Congress upon the several reforms of the Army, as those who shall have continued to the end of the war;⁽¹⁾ have the right to become parties to this Institution; provided they subscribe one month's pay, and sign their names to the general rules, in their respective State Societies, those who are present with the Army immediately;⁽²⁾ and others within six months after the Army shall be disbanded,⁽³⁾ extraordinary cases excepted; the rank, time of service, resolution of Congress by which any have been deranged, and place of residence must be added to each name — and as a testimony of affection to the memory and offspring of such officers as have died in the service, their eldest male branches shall have the same right of becoming members, as the children of the actual members of the Society.

"Those officers who are foreigners, not resident in any of the States, will have their names enrolled by the Secretary-General, and are to be considered as members in the Societies of any of the States in which they may happen to be."

Elsewhere the *Institution*, in giving reasons for the establishment of the Society of the Cincinnati, says that the

"officers of the American Army do hereby, in the most solemn manner, associate, constitute and combine themselves into one *Society of Friends*, to endure as long as they shall endure, or any of their eldest male posterity, and in failure thereof, the collateral branches who may be judged worthy of becoming its supporters and members."

(1) October 19, 1781, when Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia.

(2) May 13, 1783, when the Society first organized at Newburgh, New York.

(3) June 20, 1784, was the date when the Army was finally disbanded. The last British forces withdrew on December 3, 1783. The Treaty of Paris was signed September 3, 1783.

The above paragraphs give the basis for the rules of eligibility to the Society of the Cincinnati. An officer of the Continental Army was considered eligible for membership if he came under one of the following provisions:

- a. Served to the end of the war. (October 19, 1781.)
- b. Resigned with honor after three years' service as an officer.
- c. Was "deranged" in one of the several resolutions of Congress.

The term "deranged" means being rendered supernumerary, In the absence of sufficient replacements, it was from time to time necessary to consolidate regiments, thereby rendering some of the officers supernumerary, so that they left the service. Many such officers had subsequent service in the Militia or even other Continental organizations.

- d. An officer who had been killed in battle or died in service could be represented in the Society.

RULE OF 1854

The rules of admission to original or hereditary membership in the Society of the Cincinnati remained unchanged until the Triennial Meeting of the General Society held in Baltimore on May 18, 1854, at which time there was adopted what is known as the *Rule of 1854*. It is thus stated in the Minutes of that Meeting:

"RESOLVED, That the General Society will not object to the admission of members by the State Societies of the lineal descendants of officers of any grade, commissioned or warrant officers, who have served three years in the war of the Revolution, and have been honorably discharged.

RESOLVED, That the lineal or collateral descendants of commissioned officers, killed or maimed in battle, may be admitted members, upon ample proof of the death or maiming of such ancestor in the cause of the War of Independence.

RESOLVED, That the direct descendants above mentioned of commissioned officers who may have served in the Revolutionary War and been honorably discharged, may be admitted members of the State Societies, as they may think expedient, where the ancestor may have neglected to secure his own admission at the formation of the Society. This, upon sufficient payment of arrearage, and at the discretion of the

State Societies, in order to add to their ranks honorable and venerable members.

RESOLVED, That it shall be necessary to the admission of all members included in the present resolves, that they apply the original pay of one month, together with interest at the rate not exceeding three per cent, per annum, and that the accumulated recommendation of the General Society to commute it to half that sum, as circumstances and the ability of individuals shall indicate and justify.

RESOLVED, That it be enjoined upon the State Societies to keep constantly in mind, to preserve the blood of the descendant, that being of vital importance, and what will in the future lapse of time, give all the value which will attach to being a member of the Society of the Cincinnati."

EXCERPTS FROM BY-LAWS

APPLICATIONS

SECTION 1. All applications for admission shall be in writing to the Standing Committee, who shall consider and report upon the same to the Society at its annual meeting or at any special meeting.

ELIGIBILITY

SECTION 2. No person shall be eligible to membership who shall be under twenty-one years of age. Every applicant to be eligible must have the qualifications stated in the *Institution* of the Society, or under Rule of 1854 adopted by the General Society. Among descendants of original members or others who shall be eligible, this Society reserves the absolute right to choose such one as seems to it best fitted to promote the ends of the Society, but it will ordinarily be guided by the following principles:

I. The succession shall descend in the eldest male line so long as it continues unbroken.

II. If the eldest male line fails, the next male line shall be taken.

III. In case of the failure of the male line, the line which descended the greatest number of generations from the original member before a failure of males shall ordinarily be taken.

IV. The claims of descendants through female lines shall be determined by the same rules of primogeniture as in case of claims through the male line, so far as applicable.

V. A waiver by any person shall be regarded only as a renunciation of a claim, not as a transfer of a right.

VI. No waiver, expressed or implied, shall be considered as affecting the rights of a minor son — except for special reasons satisfactory to the Society.

VII. Where for any reason the Society deviates from the strict rules in electing a member, it shall not be considered as changing permanently the order of succession, but upon the death of such member, the old order may be restored.

VIII. As the Society for the support of the principles to which it is pledged may justly require its membership to be kept full, it may, upon satisfactory evidence that an eligible person has had knowledge of his claim and neglected to apply within a reasonable time, treat it as a waiver of the claim. If a vacancy has existed for many years, the Society may admit any descendant of the original member at its discretion, or a collateral representative.

ELECTION TO MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 3. Applicants whose cases have been favorably reported upon by the Standing Committee may be elected by ballot to membership in the Society at its annual or at any special meeting.

ENTRANCE FEES

SECTION 4. The amount to be contributed to the permanent fund of the Society, before an applicant can become a member thereof, shall be as follows:

For a life membership each applicant shall pay the sum of one hundred dollars (~~\$100.00~~^{200.00}) before his application shall be considered.

The right under which any member has been admitted may be permanently endowed by the additional payment of an amount sufficient to make the total accumulated payments under said right five hundred dollars (\$500.00).

All life and endowed membership fees, as well as donations, which shall be paid into the Society shall remain forever to the

use of the Society as a permanent fund, the income only of which may be expended.

When a membership has been permanently endowed, the right of the member so endowed and the right of the member so endowing shall henceforth be incontestable by any person claiming a superior right or by this Society, and such endowing member shall henceforth be regarded as a propositus; provided, that nothing herein shall be construed as requiring the Society to accept any individual whom it regards as unworthy.

HONORARY MEMBERS

SECTION 5. The admission of honorary members, for life only, shall be confined to those who shall be eminent lineal descendants or representatives of those who were distinguished by high military or civil virtues and services in the Revolutionary War. An honorary member shall have no vote and no title to any portion of the funds of the Society, and no one shall be admitted to honorary membership except upon the recommendation of the Standing Committee. An honorary member shall hold no office, elective or otherwise.

NOTE: It is the present policy of the Society not to admit more than one honorary member in any five-year period.

NOTES

1. The annual meeting of the Society, at which elections to membership are made, is held in April. A meeting of the Standing Committee is held on that day to consider applications and recommend to the Society election of qualified applicants. Members are also elected at special meetings.

2. The applicant must be endorsed by two members of the Society of the Cincinnati, one of whom must be a member of the North Carolina Society.

3. The right of membership passes to a lineal descendant even though not of the name of the propositus, rather than to a collateral descendant who bears the same name as the propositus.

4. The right of membership by descent from an original member passes to the senior line, as far as possible. Thus, if a member be admitted in right of an original member after persons having prior claims have given waivers, or if the Society has exercised its

right of selection and admitted to membership a person not the senior representative of the original member, then the right reverts to the senior representative upon the death of a member, provided such senior representative is personally worthy and desirous of entering the Society.

5. When a member is elected to the Society under the Rule of 1854, he is himself considered as the "propositus" as far as future eligibility of descendants is concerned.

6. The Society admits descendants of officers who were natives of or served in the forces not only of North Carolina, but of other states as well. It is the policy of the Society to obtain a release of the right from the other State Society.

7. The Society neither accepts nor gives transfers of members from or to other state Societies.

8. If an applicant has the right of succession under the Law of Primogeniture, that is there being no persons with prior claims, he would be considered eligible to be elected to membership in this Society, even though the propositus were represented in some other State Society. This is true only if the propositus be a North Carolina officer.

9. Officers of State Regiments in Continental service, are considered as qualifying as propositi. Militia officers not in Continental Service do not qualify.

10. The application blank contains spaces for the following:

(a) Statement of the applicant's descent from the Revolutionary officer whom he seeks to represent in the Society.

(b) Chart of Descent, whereon are to be given the full names of all descendants of the propositus in the applicant's line, and of all who in any generation were prior in birth to those through whom the applicant claims, with all their descendants, the dates of all marriages, births and deaths, so far as known. If any persons in the chart left no issue, this is to be stated.

11. There are no annual dues.

12. In completing the application blank and chart, care should be taken to give complete information, including dates and references. *Three* blanks should be completed and mailed to the Secretary, enclosing check for entrance fee. Fee will be returned if applicant is not admitted.

13. The rules of the Society provide that an applicant must have his application approved by a genealogist named by the Society. The name of the genealogist will be furnished by the Secretary upon request and arrangement for the payment of genealogist's fees shall be made by the applicant and the genealogist.

Applicants who are designated successors or the next of kin of a deceased member and who apply under the same right occupied by the deceased member are not required to have their applications approved by the Society genealogist.

14. All applicants are requested to list on their applications the names and addresses of their direct and collateral descendants. Space under the Chart of Descent may be used for this purpose.

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